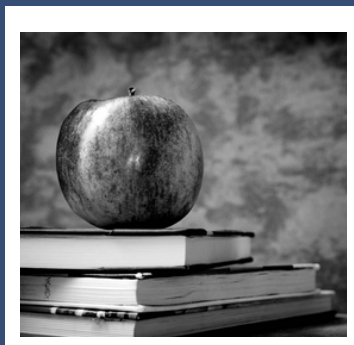

Senator Jack Reed (RI)
Congressman Raúl Grijalva (AZ-03)

Right to Read Act

H.R. xxxx

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Literacy opens the door for lifelong opportunity and economic success. And the data show that school libraries make a big difference in giving kids the skills and inspiration to become proficient and enthusiastic readers.

Students who utilize school libraries have 73% higher literacy rates than students who do not, and the positive impact of effective school libraries is highest for marginalized groups, including students experiencing poverty, students of color, and students with disabilities. But not every student has access to library services. The U.S. Department of Education reports that 2.5 million students are enrolled in districts where there are no school libraries. An estimated 1 out of 10 schools in America does not have a school library and 30% of U.S. public schools do not have full time librarians. Students experiencing the highest levels of poverty are 30% more likely to attend a school without a school library. And while school libraries are most effective when they offer resources that resonate, engage, and empower students and that align with their first amendment rights, 32 states have enacted bans on books that disproportionately limit access to titles with LGBTQ+ characters and characters of color.

The Right to Read Act will address the disparities in access to school library resources. It will increase the federal investment in literacy by reauthorizing Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants at $500 million, and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program at $100 million, targeting critical literacy resources in high need communities. The bill protects access to quality reading materials, and provides the resources needed to create a foundation for learning and student success.

FIVE REASONS TO SUPPORT THE BILL

1. The Right to Read Act ensures that low-income, minority children, children with disabilities, and English language learners are not disproportionally enrolled in schools that lack effective school libraries.

2. Supports the development of effective school libraries, including the recruitment, retention and professional development of state-certified school librarians.

3. Protects access to linguistically and developmentally appropriate, evidence -based reading instruction, effective school libraries, family literacy support, culturally diverse and inclusive materials, reading materials in the home, and the freedom to choose reading materials.

4.Reaffirms that first amendment rights apply to school libraries, in response to the growing trend of book banning, which currently affects students and schools in 32 states, limiting inquiry and access to information that reflects diverse views and experiences.

5. Provides protections for educators and librarians acting to provide access to reading materials.

Right to Read is endorsed by:

- American Library Association
- American Association of School Librarians